

Finch & C^o



SIX FINE AGATE ARTISTS OR COLOURMAN'S MORTARS AND THREE PESTLES

A COLLECTION OF SIX FINE AGATE ARTISTS OR COLOURMAN'S MORTARS AND THREE PESTLES PERHAPS FOR A
MINIATURIST PORTRAIT PAINTER

19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 1.5CM HIGH, 3.5CM WIDE (MIN.) – 3CM HIGH, 7CM WIDE (MAX)

½ INS HIGH, 1¼ INS WIDE (MIN.) – 1¼ INS HIGH, 2¾ INS WIDE (MAX)

SEE: FINCH & CO CATALOGUE NO. 6, ITEM NO. 27, FOR ANOTHER EXAMPLE

LITERATURE

THE GRINDING OF PIGMENTS AND THE PREPARATION OF PAINTS AND MEDIA WAS ONE OF THE MOST LABOUR INTENSIVE ASPECTS OF THE PAINTER'S WORKSHOP. WHEN SIR GODFREY KNELLER CAME TO ENGLAND IN 1674/5 HE BROUGHT WITH HIM A SERVANT WHOSE SOLE JOB WAS TO GRIND PIGMENTS AND PREPARE MATERIALS FOR USE IN THE STUDIO. THE MINIATURIST NICHOLAS HILLIARD LISTED 'FINE CRISTALL, SERPENTINE, JASPER OR HARD PORPHYRY' AS THE MOST SUITABLE MATERIALS FOR COLOURMEN'S GRINDSTONES OR MORTARS. THE HARDER AND DENSER THE MATERIAL THE LESS LIKELY IT WOULD BE TO CONTAMINATE THE PIGMENT BEING GROUND. SOME MINERALS SUCH AS LAPIS LAZULI, USED TO MAKE ULTRAMARINE, WERE SO HARD AND SO EXPENSIVE THAT THEY WERE ALWAYS FIRST REDUCED IN SMALL AMOUNTS BY POUNDING WITH A MORTAR AND PESTLE, WHICH WAS COVERED WITH A CLOTH TO PREVENT THE VALUABLE DUST FROM DRIFTING AWAY.

OTHER PIGMENTS, SUCH AS OCHRE WERE GROUND BY MEANS OF A 'MULLER' OR PEBBLE STONE AND A FLAT 'LEDGER', AND WERE USED FOR LARGER WORKS IN THE ARTIST'S STUDIO.